



**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB840**  
**Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023**  
House - Environment and Transportation Committee  
Jose Coronado-Flores , On Behalf of CASA

March 8th, 2023

Dear Honorable Chair Barve and Members of the Committee,

CASA is pleased to offer **favorable testimony in support of HB840 - Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023**. CASA is the largest immigrant services and advocacy organization in Maryland, and in the Mid-Atlantic region, with a membership of over 120,000 Black and Latino immigrants and working families. We would like to thank Delegate Boyce for her leadership on this bill.

HB840 is important legislation that will address the pollution-based inequalities that persist throughout Maryland by allowing state agencies to reject environmental permits based on cumulative pollution analyzes and a community's Environmental Justice Score. The bill will also create a channel of notification for community members whenever businesses or projects petition for these permits. In particular, CASA is invested in seeing this bill pass, because our members populate some of the most polluted communities in the state.

Take census tract 24033806602 for example, which contains East Riverdale, MD in Prince George's County. This low-income immigrant community has an exposure score of .91 out of a highest possible score of 1. The residents of this community are exposed to countless toxins everyday. Additionally, consider census tract 24031702000, which is located slightly Northwest of Langley Park in Silver Spring. This community has an exposure score of 0.96 and socioeconomic score of 0.92, with a total EJ score of .83. This is another example of a low-income community having extreme exposure to toxins. Lastly, census tract 24031700724 in Gaithersburg has an exposure score of 1.00 and a socioeconomic score of .94.<sup>1</sup> The data from these three communities explicitly outlines how seriously overburdened some of our communities are. The long-term effects of living in polluted communities can range from cancer to asthma.

People living in highly-polluted areas should not have to worry about more polluting businesses and projects opening up in their communities, and, with the passing of HB840, these communities will have a way of preventing more pollution in their living space. CASA urges a favorable report.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://p1.cgis.umd.edu/mdejscreen/>